

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Situation in Guinea-Bissau and the Deployment of United States Forces *June 12, 1998*

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On June 6, 1998, elements of Guinea-Bissau's army mutinied and attacked the government of President Vieira. Government forces mounted a counterattack, but have been unable to quell the revolt. Rebel forces, who occupy a military camp very near the U.S. Embassy compound in Bissau, came under attack from government and foreign forces on June 10, placing the Embassy and U.S. Government employees at risk.

As a result of the deteriorating situation in Bissau and the threat to American lives and property, a standby evacuation force of U.S. military personnel from the U.S. European Command was deployed to Dakar, Senegal, on June 10 to be prepared to evacuate American private citizens and government employees, as well as selected third country nationals in Bissau. Currently, both the airfield in Bissau and the main road to the airport are closed due to the fighting between government and rebel forces. Forty-four Americans have already been evacuated by a Portuguese vessel and a Senegalese ship from the city of Bissau, leaving our Ambassador and a staff of four in the U.S. Embassy there. Efforts are underway to coordinate the evacuation of 17 Peace Corps volunteers in upcountry areas.

The forces currently in Dakar, Senegal, include enabling forces, a Joint Task Force Headquarters, fixed-wing aircraft and associated support personnel, and a U.S. special forces company. Although U.S. forces are equipped for combat, this action is being undertaken solely for the purpose of protecting American citizens and property. United States forces will redeploy as soon as it is determined that the evacuation is completed.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to protect American citizens in Guinea-Bissau.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 13.

The President's Radio Address *June 13, 1998*

Good morning. Later today I will meet with families in Springfield, Oregon, families whose lives just a few weeks ago were irreparably changed by a 15-year-old boy with semiautomatic weapons.

We will speak, no doubt, of pain and loss and of the tragic, senseless nature of such acts. I'm sure we'll reflect, as Americans often have in recent months, on similar shocking incidents in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; Edinboro, Pennsylvania. This litany of loss is familiar to every American and has tragically grown longer. Now we must think

as a nation long and hard about what we can do to stop this violence and save more of our children.

Around our kitchen tables, on our public airwaves, in our private thoughts, we all are asking ourselves, what are the root causes of such youth violence? This is an important and healthy discussion, but it must lead us to take action and take the responsibility that belongs to us all.

We're long past the question of whether culture makes an impact. Of course, it does. School shootings don't occur in a vacuum; they are, in part, symptoms of a culture that too

often glorifies violence. It is no wonder, as scores of studies show, that our children are increasingly numb to violence. They see and hear it everywhere, from TV screens to movie screens to computer screens, and in popular music.

When mindless killing becomes a staple of family entertainment, when over and over children see cinematic conflicts resolved not with words but with weapons, we shouldn't be surprised when children, from impulse or design, follow suit.

Those who create and profit from the culture of violence must step up to their responsibility. So too, must the rest of us remember our responsibility to monitor the content of what is seen by young eyes and heard by young ears and to constantly counsel young people that, though too much violence exists in our society, it is wrong and ultimately self-destructive to those who do it.

We have another important responsibility, to remember that unsupervised children and guns are a deadly combination. Parents cannot permit easy access to weapons that kill. We must get serious about gun safety. We must, every one of us, get serious about prevention.

That's why, for 5 years now, our administration has worked so hard to protect our children. School security is tighter. Prevention is better. Penalties are tougher. We've promoted discipline with curfews, school uniforms, and antitruancy policies. We have worked with gun manufacturers to promote child safety locks on guns, and we will continue to show zero tolerance toward guns in schools. During the 1996-97 school year, our policy led to the expulsion of nearly 6,100 law-breaking students and the prevention of countless acts of violence.

This year Congress has an opportunity to further protect America's children by passing the juvenile crime bill I proposed. It will ban violent juveniles from buying guns for life and take other important steps. Congress can also give communities much needed support. I've proposed that in our balanced budget, \$95 million be allocated to the prevention of juvenile crime, including the promotion of after-school programs which provide positive alternatives and

ways in which young people can fulfill themselves and learn more and be with other good people doing good things in the very hours when so much juvenile crime occurs.

I urge Congress to step up to its responsibilities, to listen to law enforcement professionals and reject special interest groups who are trying to defeat this bill, to invest in prevention so that we can stop more violent outbursts before they start.

In Springfield, and in far too many recent cases, troubled children announced their intentions before turning guns on their classmates. We've learned that terrible threats and rage in the face of rejection can be more than idle talk. To help adults understand the signs and respond to them before it's too late, today I'm directing the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General to work with school officials and law enforcement to develop an early warning guide. It will be available to every school in America when classes start this fall and will help adults reach out to troubled children quickly and effectively. School children, too, should be taught how to recognize danger signals when they're sent.

All across America, communities are taking responsibility for making our schools and streets safer for our children. Over all, juvenile crime is going down. But we can and must do better at preventing these terrible tragedies. As individuals and as a nation, we must do more to teach our children right from wrong and to teach them how to resolve conflicts peacefully. In this way, we'll build a better, safer future for our children, freer of fear, and full of promise.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:30 a.m. on June 12 at the Benson Hotel in Portland, OR, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Kipland P. Kinkel, who was charged with the May 21 shooting rampage at Thurston High School in Springfield, OR, which killed 2 students and wounded 22.